777 conceptions developed in connection with the veneration of
751 ancestors, concerning the influence of the ancestors, who live where Nsambe does, on the terrestrial well-being of their
754 descendants. The most important of the medicines for wealth,
777 atum or aseb, that is, the Mekuk medicine, is based on the ideas of sorcery which I discussed in the previous section /Ed., not translated/. The skulls needed for the ancestor cult are not in
[769] this case those from relatives who died a natural death, but from those who were murdered secretly by sorcery (poisoning). Each biăn akū'ma, therefore, is a nsōm, a sin. The murder victims,
[826] or rather their souls, are called mekūk (1). A person who keeps

1. Etymologically related to nkūk, "upper part of the body." Perhaps we have here an intentional circumlocution, because the Pangwe like to avoid the real designation for their mesōm (sins).

the skulls in order to acquire wealth is called e mōde a bĕlĕ mekūk (= e mōde a n'a mekūk), that is, the man who has the Mekuk. I have known a Mekuk man who had no less than ten skulls of his murdered relatives in his house. In addition, the Mekuk man possesses magical devices which he sells on request together with the skulls in exchange for an excessive payment from people who themselves want to become Mekuk men. The latter are of course only sorcerers, that is, people who -- as was said in Section 12 /Ed., not translated/ -- receive the power to practice sorcery in their youth through a medicine, but who perhaps until then had not yet used their power and now want to train themselves in the specialized field of Mekuk medicine. For this purpose, their teacher demands that they murder a close relative, usually a father or mother, and bring him the skull. He himself will give them in exchange an older /150/ skull from his own collection and in addition frequently the back bones. The first
[608] skull of a Mekuk collection is therefore one of a stranger and has already been effective as a medicine. It is not an actual ancestral

754 777 [608] skull, but may be regarded as such because all the Mekuk people enter into a kind of kinship relation with one another and the skull medicine that has been effective for one will likewise be successful for the others. In this way the new Mekuk man is able to go on murdering and chooses his victims from among his closest relatives, older brothers, sisters, brothers-in-law, uncles, etc., in order to become rich through the mediation of the souls of his victims who do not suspect that the sorcery (or poison) of their dear relative made possible their sudden reunion with Nsambe. Wealth acquired in this way naturally also includes the inheritance which is thereby more speedily obtained. The effect of the magical medicine is described in the following manner. The Mekuk man places the medicine in a cloth and offers this to his brother, for instance. If the brother has "sense," he may say: "Oh, formerly you used to buy many pieces of cloth and gave none of them to me! What's the idea of this piece of cloth now? I don't want it!" Then the Mekuk man himself becomes ill. The Mekuk man may offer his hand to his brother when he returns from a journey, having first sprinkled a medicine into it. Most frequently, however, the medicine is given to a cock which, according to one informant, has its tail feathers plucked out; the cock is then given as a present to a relative home from a journey. If the relative eats the animal, he is supposed to die, but if he refuses it or secretly throws the animal away, the Mekuk man will become ill and die. In still other cases, the medicine is poured into a tobacco pipe, bush salt, or food. Whether any of this has a physiological effect or not must remain undecided, as I have already said on pages 3 and 4.

Even the Mekuk sorcerer believes that a failure of his attempt would result in his death, as we saw in Section 12 /Ed., not translated/ in the case of the wicked sorcerers. It is evidently assumed that if the person attacked notices that he is an intended victim, he himself goes over to the attack and on his part tries to get rid of the enemy. That is to say, according to the Pangwe conception, he sends his sorcery against that of the attacker. It is certain that this belief considerably limits the number of relatives murdered.

612 of mwanó to that of the ésa. The eldest son is not only almost
601 the exclusive heir to property — "he inherits at least seven tenths,"
561 writes Mr. Bertaut — but he also has religious privileges. He is the sole guardian of the skulls of ancestors, and he has political privileges, if he shows himself sufficiently able.

601 Within the maternal kinship the most important relations are
608 those between nephew (mwanõ kal) and maternal uncle (nya-nduma). Of this we have proof in an early study of the Fang of the N'Djolé region, and in a recent document written at the time of a clan gathering which shows the maintenance of some of these relations. Captain Curault (1) refers to them in a precise manner in his

1. Captain Curault, "Monographie du secteur de N'Djolé au Gabon" [Monograph on the N'Djolé Sector in Gabon], Revue des Troupes Coloniales, 68, February, 1908.

monograph on the N'Djolé sector: "The relations between uncle and nephew are very close; during his life the nephew gives his uncle a great many presents to increase still further the price paid to his uncle for his mother. In the same way, whenever his nephew pays him a visit, the uncle kills a chicken for him, etc... as does the father-in-law for his son-in-law. ... If a poor nephew needs goods to pay for a palaver or to get married, he can go to his uncle, sure that he will receive help from him, even if he has not often given him presents. It is a supreme shame for a man
[428] to send away the son of his sister with empty hands." Maternal uncle and nephew have a share in the inheritance. An official report of the clan gathering of the Yémisèm-Éba still provides in 1948 for the "indemnity" due at the time of the death of a nya-ñduma (a sum corresponding to the value of a woman and a sheep) and on the death of a mwanõ-kal (a slightly smaller sum, "varying according to the size of the inheritance," and a sheep). (2)

2. Réunion de 25 villages de la tribu Yémissem a Afénane (District d'Oyem) du 12 an 19 Juillet, 1948 [Gathering of 25 villages of the Yémissem tribe at

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Afénane (Oyem District) from July 12-19, 1948], Archives d'Oyem.

The relation between the mwanõ-kal and the nya-nduma is about the same as that between son-in-law and father-in-law.

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608 Such an assembly of facts is understandable only in terms of the Fang principle regulating the circulation of bride prices. "The brother marries with his sister's bride price," nduma a luġ nõ biki kal. Within such a circuit, the establishment of a couple concerns not only [117] the two partners but also the sister of the husband who has indirectly "provided" the bride price making the marriage possible, and the brother of the wife who has indirectly "recovered" this same bride price in order to get married. This explains the bonds existing between the maternal [sic] nephew and
601 uncle and also the rights which the paternal aunt (sõna) has, according to Curault, "over her brother's children, since it is thanks to the price of her sale that her brother was able to get married and consequently have children." In exceptional circumstances
608 614 this relationship is sufficiently active to allow the nephew to settle in the midst of the family grouping of the maternal uncle or of the husband of the paternal aunt. We have had occasion to observe the first case, which involved a change of clan affiliation. A man of Yèngwi birth left his grouping following a death of which he was suspected; having joined his maternal uncle with whom he settled down to live, where he was considered as an Esabâg (he was said to be ña ayõg. entered into the clan).

601 The kinship terms in the Fang system are applied not only to a specific class of individuals but are often used in an extended manner. Ngwé may designate any maternal relative. Nya-nduma (literally, the mother's brother) is applied to certain maternal male relatives: maternal grandfather and his brothers, maternal uncles and their descendants (1), in fact, to all the men belonging

1. Cf. L. Mba, op. cit., pp. 32 and 41.

to the nd'è bot of the maternal grandfather. Mwanõ-kal implies

721 Everyone then comes near, the chief first, and dips a finger
779 into the pot of blood and tastes it. The practitioner also dips in
782 his finger and with it touches each warrior's totem to make the
266 so-called racial mark (ndem ayôn). "Adopted" warriors are ex-
608 cluded from this ceremony, perhaps the only occasion when a distinction is drawn between them and the tribe; in some smaller clans they are not excluded from this ceremony.

721 When a tribe is populous and a single victim would not be
779 enough, two, three, and sometimes ten or more are provided.
782 As soon as each warrior has thus "renewed the mark," the sacred dances start again. During that time the chief joins in at first, then takes what remains of the blood, smears his ancestral skulls with it, and then sprinkles the tribal totems while the warriors sing the totem song. [553] The practitioner, helped by his acolytes makes a kind of large sticky ball from the sap of cer-
[824] tain rubber creepers (1) and a kind of gum,(2) and knead it inside

1. Landolphia Klaineana and Thollonii of the Apocyneceae.

2. This gum is produced by the Acacia erubescens Wildm. of the acacia family.

the victim's thoracic cavity so that it becomes soaked with blood.
[787] At the end of the ceremony he takes a bit from this ball and applies it to each warrior's chest. According to how long it sticks, it will give an augury about the warrior's life, death, and the wounds he will receive.

721 As soon as the ceremonies are completed the victims are
782 cut into thin strips, and each person receives his share. The feast
266 begins. This is the end of the actual totemic ceremony, to be followed from then on by purely religious and fetishist rites. I therefore need say no more on the subject.

721 After the meal, the dance, and the songs, the skulls and totems are put back in the évora biéri and carried back to the huts.

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for administering an effective emetic along with the test poison. I shall evaluate these ordeals later when discussing religion.

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Women are not subject to the tests I have just mentioned except sometimes to the nkal test. Among the Fan they do not drink the test poison; they are, in fact, considered as irresponsible and in a state of tutelage. Therefore in cases of serious accustion, a woman's father or husband has to take her place but does not invoke the totem, because it would not be able to act on her behalf since it does not acknowledge the woman.

Only for an accusation of sorcery does a woman have to submit to a test.

She is brought gagged to the middle of the village, two female relatives pull her head back, and the practitioner empties
[278] into her eye the sap of a euphorbia called ka. (2) If she comes

2. Euphorbia scandens, of the arboreal euphorbias.

through unhurt, she is innocent. If, on the contrary, as nearly always happens, the eye leaves the socket, she is immediately
[266] declared guilty, dragged away into the forest, burnt, and eaten. The accusation frequently arises, and punishment is never delayed.

VIII. Blood Exchange

● 608 " 'Brotherhood' (in America, totemisation)," says Mgr. Le Roy, (3) "is relationship through an exchange of blood; if

3. La religion des primitifs [The Religion of Primitive Peoples] op. cit., p. 120.

this is not quite totemism, it is very near to it."

●608 All primitive man's interests lead him to extend his relationships and alliances, that is, briefly, to enlarge his family. Therefore the exchange of blood has two rather different aspects. "By means of certain mysterious practices, certain actions and words that are kept secret among the initiated but that always involve an exchange of blood, it is possible first of all to gain an animal's favor, to make him follow and obey, to assume his various aspects as a disguise if need be, and to take advantage of his strength, [566] cunning, and skill. In a word, one can make a 'brother' of him, and perhaps this constitutes the basis of all totemism." (1)

1. Le Roy, op. cit., p. 120.

Exchanging blood with an animal -- for all alliances with animals always include a blood exchange -- is therefore, in fact, the central, the first, and by far the most important of totemic rites. I went into this point at great length in discussing the origin of the totem and nagualism.

Yet if a man at the present time seeks above all a covenant with an animal, a temporary and personal alliance in the primitive sense, as Mgr. Le Roy properly points out, (2) by this

2. Op. cit., p. 122.

alliance "man not only wants to get hold of the animal such as it is and link its family with his own, but he also and especially seeks that animal's family, as strengthened by the presence and activity of a spirit from the invisible world -- the animal's own soul, the spirit of the ancestors, the tutelary genius. ..." In a word, blood alliance is a pact with the invisible world.

What a man achieves with an animal, he would all the more like to effect with another man. This will be a powerful means of extending his personal relationships, his alliances, his "family." He chooses by preference, therefore, one whose friendship, power, and loyalty he values, and he concludes a pact of alliance that will be sanctioned by an exchange of blood in a special ceremony and according to special rites. With the

608 rites completed, the two men become truly blood brothers, ndugu among the Swahili of the east coast, ndégo among the Mpongwe of the equator, angom among our Fan; these represent the same word, with the same root, the different forms resulting from differences in dialect.

608 622 Still, two conditions are necessary to blood exchange: in the first place, a real operation is performed. Only chiefs make this exchange, and believe themselves to be completely bound and, if need be, ready to give their lives for their blood brothers. They are thus in a position to exact reciprocity. Only the chiefs, as we have said, make blood brothers; for they alone are representatives of their race and guardians of the totem, consequently masters of the intrinsic virtue and strength of the tribe. Anyone other than the chief is therefore disqualified, [567] and the chief himself cannot appoint a delegate to take his place. Nevertheless, this does happen from time to time! A white man who chances by, perhaps an explorer, anxious to obtain the good will of an influential chief, or often a trader pursuing his business, may ask a chief to make him a "blood brother." The chief sees his own advantage here and readily agrees, knowing perfectly well that he is certain to receive many presents. The ceremony takes place, but the white man, who believes that he has gained his ends, is really very naive, for in most cases the chief will have appointed a deputy and the rite means nothing legally.

However, a chief does sometimes go through the ceremony himself but in that case the basic rites are abbreviated, often omitted. An African knows too well what he is undertaking and has no desire for a white blood brother. Yet in certain circumstances, and well aware of what he is doing, an African chief does really make a blood brother. Thus, for instance, a chief of Kilimanjaro, named Tumba, is blood brother to Mgr. Le Roy, (1) who has left us an interesting and thorough account

1. Voyage au Kilima-Ndjaro [Journey to Kilimanjaro] by Mgr. Le Roy; Mame, Tours. See also Ann. Prop. Foi. 1882,

7: Trilles--109 M-5 (1893-1912) 1912 FH9 Fang FH9
Buye F015

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p. 369 ff. [Annuaire de la Propagation de la Foi, Yearbook of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith].

of the ceremony and associated ritual.

The second condition is that the parties concerned be of different tribes and not have the same totem. This condition is essential and proceeds from the very nature of totemism.

The process of blood alliance or blood exchange is rather curious. Among the Fan it is as follows and is found in precisely the same form in several Congo tribes somewhat related to the Fan, like the Wabuyu of the Upper Congo.

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One of my mission colleagues recently described it thus: (1)

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1. Bulletin des Pères Blancs d'Anvers [Bulletin of the White Fathers of Antwerp], n° de mai [May] 1910.

"In the evening there is a loud beating of drums; several rifle shots followed by shouts of joy announce a festival. Urged by curiosity, I went in the direction of the noise and discovered that two chiefs were to effect a blood exchange that day. They came forward solemnly . . . the participants crowded around and let out bloodcurdling howls. The protagonists solemnly sit down on special seats [568], face to face, with their knees touching. A white cloth is thrown over them, and the ceremony begins.

"The minister [practitioner] of one of the chiefs of the village where I am stationed takes a small thin knife and makes an incision in the leg of the foreign chief, while the latter's minister does the same to the village chief. Each one spreads on a leaf a paste that looks like butter, and simultaneously both ministers rub the two incisions. They keep exchanging the leaves so that their masters' blood is thoroughly mixed, the better to seal the mutual friendship.

"At the same time ivory horns are sounded and drums beat martial airs, rather unreasonably, it seems to me, at a 'peace conference.' The music arouses angry passions in the

7: Trilles--111 M-5 (1893-1912) 1912 FH9 Fang FH9
Buye F015

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songs celebrating the achievements of the tribe's forefathers and teaching contempt for death.

"Then comes the feast, from which women are strictly excluded."

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A ceremony identical to that of the Wabuyu is found among the Ozèm Fan, which I have seen several times, and is almost the same among the Dzandzama and Bakélé.

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It is rather strange to find almost the same customs among the most ancient peoples. For instance, Herodotus wrote of the Scythians: "This is how the Scythians used to take an oath: they would pour wine into a large earthenware cup, and the parties to the oath would add their blood from slight cuts made on their bodies with knife or sword; a boar-spear, an axe, and a lance would then be dipped into the cup. They then recited long prayers and drank from the cup. The leading members of the court would drink after them." (1)

1. Herodotus, Book IV, Ch. 70.

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Blood alliance is the last general totemic rite that we have to deal with. Next come particular rites. The totem usually plays a far less important part in these than in general rites, and we shall therefore be much less concerned with them. [570]

Chapter XVI

The Totem in Fan Life: Particular Rites

Summary:

1. Birth.
2. Adoption.
3. Marriage.
4. Hunting, fishing, husbandry.
5. Trade and palavers.
6. Diseases and death. The funeral dance and the fanki.